

Public Workshop Summary

*Hamilton City Flood Damage Reduction
and Ecosystem Restoration, California*
Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement/
Environmental Impact Report

Convened: January 9, 2003
6 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.

Location: Hamilton Union High School
Highway 32 & Canal Street, Hamilton City, CA

Workshop Presenters

The following Comprehensive Study Team members and project consultants participated in the workshop:

U.S. Army Corps Engineers (USACE)

- Jerry Blevins
- Ed Flint
- Craig Gaines
- Jennifer Gonzalez
- Dave Killam
- Alicia Kirchner
- Erin Taylor
- Eric Thaut

Department of Water Resources (DWR)

- Annalena Bronson
- Steve Cowdin
- Gary Lemon
- Ricardo Pineda

Consultants:

- Craig Moyle, Katz & Associates
- Tamara White, Katz & Associates

Edie Lohmann represented the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and presented information about the FEMA National Flood Insurance Program.

Purpose

This workshop was the first of two public workshops scheduled for the Hamilton City Feasibility Study. The purpose of the workshop was to provide local residents and interested parties with information about the status of the Study (past and future) and to provide a forum for public comment and input concerning the Study. The workshop consisted of an open house session where attendees could talk with study team members about the Study, a group question and answer session, and a presentation about the FEMA National Flood Insurance Program. The following is a summary of the topics that were discussed at the workshop.

Summary

The workshop was held at Hamilton Union High School. There was a strong community turnout (over 70) with many arriving early. People were encouraged to visit several informational booths to learn about the Study and talk with study team members. Team members documented the following comments and issues expressed during these open house discussions:

- How were the proposed sewer treatment plant sites selected? Why not locate them north of Hamilton City?
- No negative impacts to Mud and Chico Creek.
- Don't flood the highway
- The "ring levee" idea – we don't want to constrain growth
- Look at Holly Sugar Plant for potential place to move sewage treatment ponds – not near homes or schools.
- Move the sewage treatment plant further from town.
- Conversion of agriculture to restoration will result in a direct loss of money to the community.
- Agricultural flooding south of Department of Fish and Game (DFG) property:
 - Agriculture needs protection from higher velocity flows from the north
 - Prior to DFG acquisition of the property, agricultural lands flooded primarily from backwater only
 - A levee was constructed to protect the agricultural lands, but it was overtopped
 - Landowners not allowed to obtain equivalent (past) protection
- Don't increase flows to Butte Basin
- Must rock any new levee
- Why should a government agency and a conservation organization have the right to decide to let the river meander in such a manner that it is destroying private property and homes? We would end up fined or in jail if we tried to touch the land they claim in order to save ourselves – and they will do nothing to stop the destruction. It is the money coming out of the taxpayer's pockets they are using to do this. There is something totally wrong with this government when they have the power to do this – and we don't seem to have any right to put a stop to it and make them correct the damage they have caused – Is Hamilton City next? Beth Woodward, 30-year Hamilton City resident

After the open house portion of the workshop, Eric Thaut, project planner for the USACE, gave a brief overview of the Study and facilitated a question and answer session. Questions/comments from the audience were varied but most revolved around three categories, 1) Study Process, 2) Study Area Definition, 3) Alternative Plans / Operation and Maintenance.

- 1) Study Process. Questions about USACE regulations, study team stability, and the availability of study information were discussed. USACE regulations were discussed as they apply to the Hamilton City Study. All USACE regulations are available to the public and can be found at the following website: <http://www.usace.army.mil/publications/>. It is the responsibility of the study team to know and explain these regulations to the public. It was discussed that this project combines both flood damage reduction and ecosystem restoration components, something that previous Hamilton City studies have not done. The potential to achieve both flood damage reduction and ecosystem benefits provides an unprecedented opportunity to successfully develop and implement a project for the Hamilton City area. In response to questions about study team stability, the group was assured that although the study team composition may change, the team is committed to making this project a successful one. Public participation was

identified as being critical to project success. The audience was informed of the following web site for obtaining information about the Study:

<http://www.compstudy.org/hamilton.html>

- 2) Study Area Definition. Many people at the workshop thought that the Study should evaluate past flooding changes in the area with respect to the construction and raising of levees on the east side of the Sacramento River. The study team explained that the best opportunity for a successful project was to focus on improving the existing conditions; focusing on previous conditions and actions could detract from and jeopardize the success of the current project. It was also asked if the Study would include evaluation of potential threats to the Glenn Colusa Canal just north of the private “J” levee. The study team acknowledged that the canal would be considered in the Study.
- 3) Alternative Plans / Operation and Maintenance. Workshop attendees presented a locally developed levee alignment to the study team. Strong community support for this alignment was expressed by many attendees. The study team assured the group that the locally developed levee alignment would be in the array of alternative plans evaluated during the study. The results of alternative plan evaluations will be presented at the May public workshop. There was also a concern expressed that restored habitat in any plan would be allowed to become overgrown and cause unanticipated hydraulic impacts. The study team acknowledged that maintenance of flood damage reduction and ecosystem restoration features of the project is essential. These maintenance requirements will be identified during the study. Maintenance of any project features will be the responsibility of non-Federal agencies and/or organizations.

Following the question and answers session, a representative from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided information on the National Flood Insurance Program. The workshop was adjourned at approximately 8:15 p.m.

The next public workshop for the Hamilton City Feasibility Study is scheduled for May 2003. The community expressed an interest in being involved throughout the Study. Details about the Study, the May workshop, and opportunities to provide input to the Study will be posted on the Internet at:

<http://www.compstudy.org/hamilton.html>

The May workshop will present for discussion an array of alternative plans to reduce flood damages and restore the ecosystem.